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(47)



MEMORANDUM

DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

The Situation in Vietnam

State Department review completed

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13 March 1967



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Information as of 1600

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HIGHLIGHTS

Communist forces are intensifying pressure on South Vietnamese Government administrative headquarters in the provinces. Several reports indicate that the Communists are planning larger and more sophisticated attacks in the Saigon area.

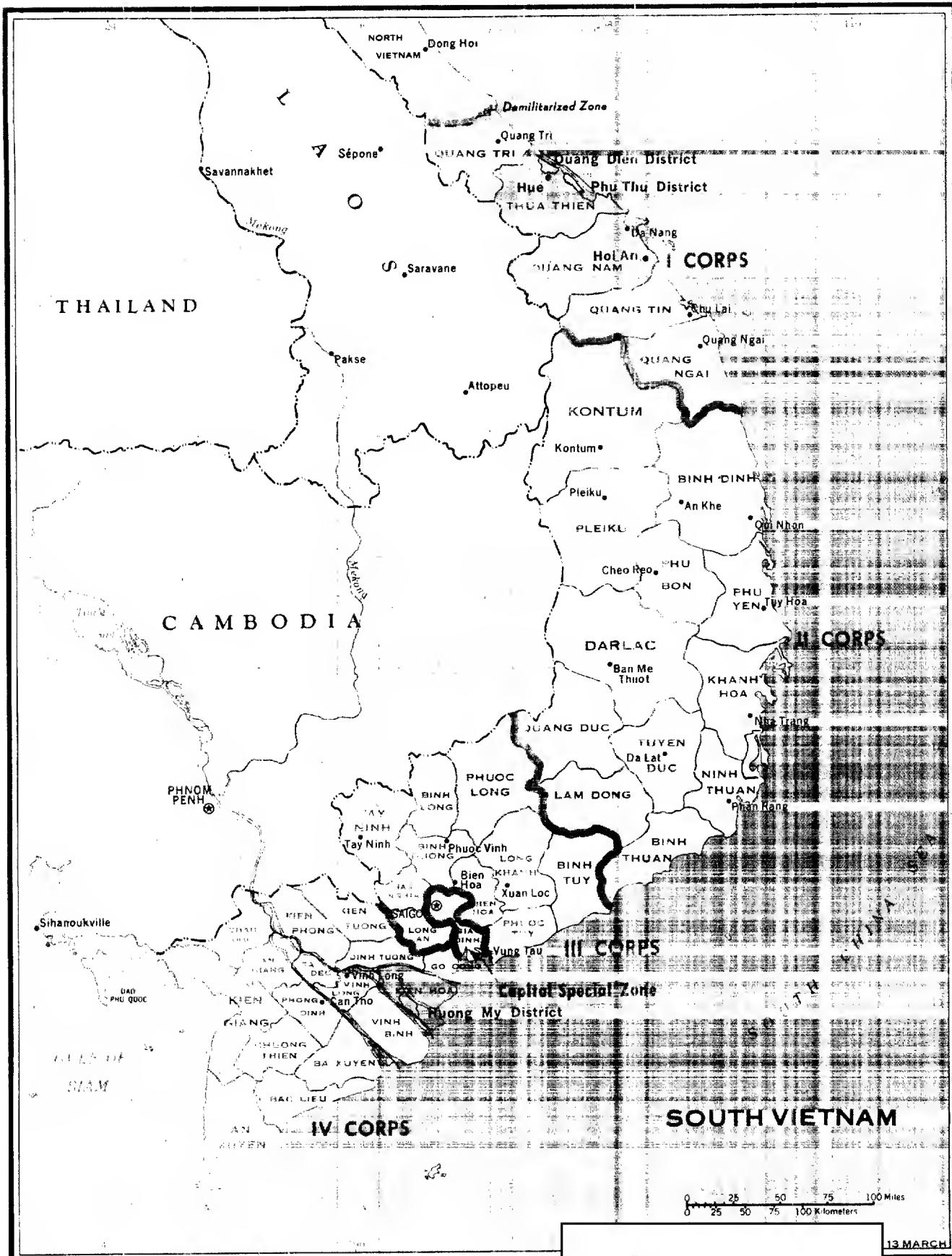
I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Viet Cong forces apparently have intensified their efforts against South Vietnamese Government administrative headquarters throughout the country (Paras. 1-4). Rockets, in addition to mortars and recoilless rifles, may be used in future attacks against allied installations in the Saigon area (Paras. 5-8).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: A delegation from the Directorate is scheduled to confer with the Constituent Assembly on 14 March to iron out the remaining areas of contention in the constitution (Paras. 1-2).

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V. Communist Political Developments: Further evidence has been obtained from captured documents on problems of North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam (Paras. 1-5).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

Communists Intensify Pressure on GVN Administrative Headquarters

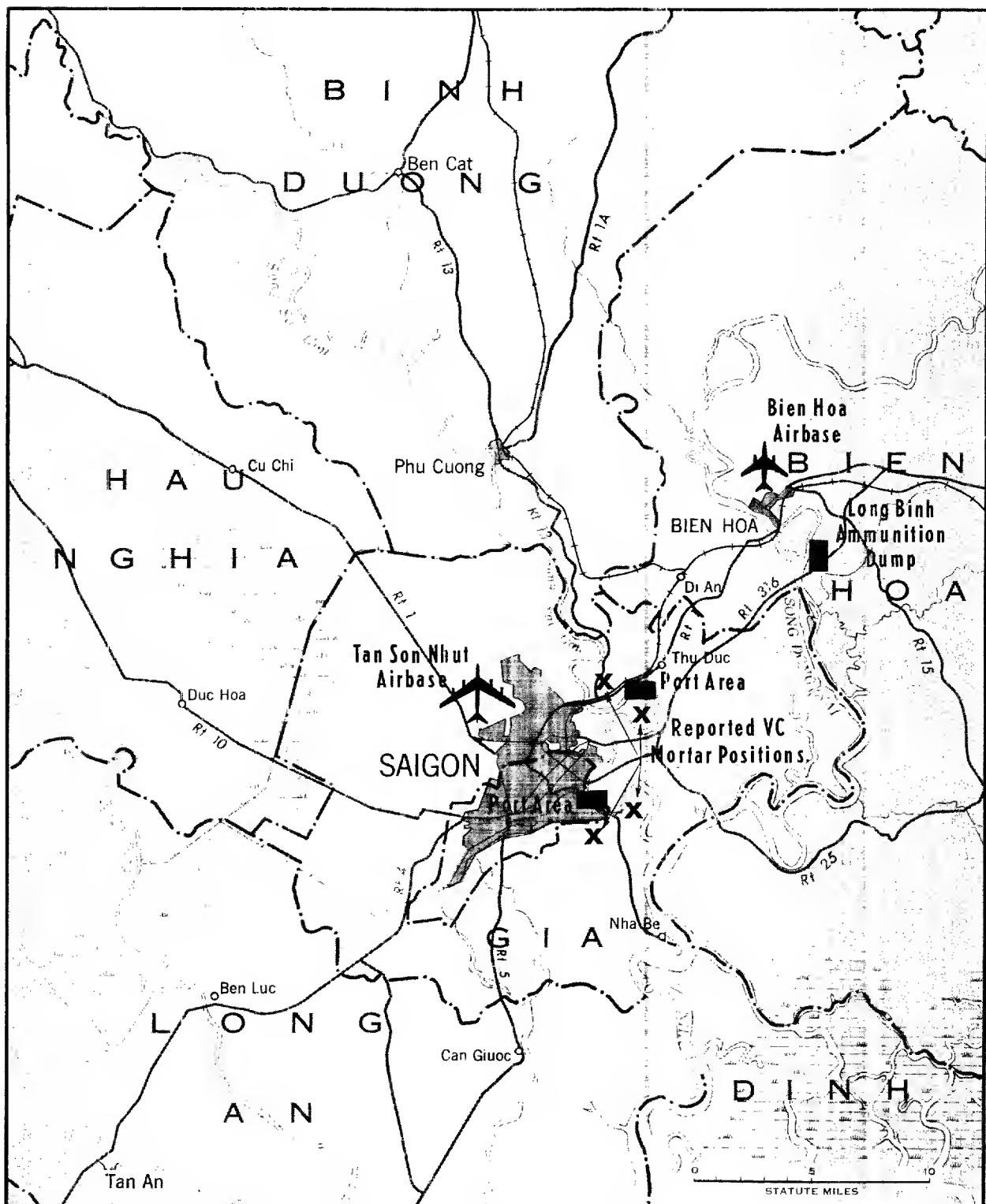
1. In a continuing effort to intensify pressure against GVN administrative headquarters, Viet Cong forces on 13 March penetrated district-level installations in three provinces, inflicted significant casualties on defenders, and then withdrew.

2. In Quang Nam Province, an estimated two Viet Cong companies, supported by heavy mortar fire, attacked a National Police (NP) station on the outskirts of the provincial capital of Hoi An. After overwhelming the garrison's defenders, the attackers released a number of persons being detained by the police for questioning. Attacks against National Police installations on a countrywide basis appear to have increased since 1 January 1967, and probably reflect heightened Viet Cong interest in disrupting police intelligence work in connection with the Revolutionary Development program.

3. A second foray by enemy forces was directed against the government's district headquarters at Phu Thu, eight miles southeast of Hue, in northern coastal Thua Thien Province. An estimated 80 guerrillas, led by "special action teams," breached the headquarters defenses and annihilated the garrison's 50 defenders. Phu Thu is the second district in the province to come under severe enemy pressure. The other district--Quang Dien--has been subjected to renewed Communist military pressures since December, according to a press story from the area. The pressures have resulted in the death of its dynamic district chief and in the erosion of nearly two years of successful pacification efforts. Communist forces in both districts have simply been too strong for local GVN outposts to repel.

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4. The third government administrative center hit by the Viet Cong on 13 March was the district of Huong My in the delta province of Kien Hoa. The guerrillas attacked and penetrated the Regional Forces outpost which served as the district seat, but were forced to withdraw under pressure from Allied air strikes. Security in Huong My district is probably the worst in the province and the Viet Cong exercise almost unrestricted control over the district.

Viet Cong Plans in the Saigon Area

5. Viet Cong guerrillas are reported to be planning larger and more sophisticated attacks on allied targets in the Saigon area. [redacted]

[redacted] an ambitious Viet Cong project which includes the use of Russian-made rockets--similar to the 140-mm. rockets used against the US air base at Da Nang on 28 February--around Saigon.

[redacted] the Da Nang attack marked the introduction of a new Viet Cong tactic in which rockets and larger artillery will be used in addition to mortars and recoilless rifles when static allied positions are attacked.

6. Another report from a Viet Cong prisoner indicates that mortar attacks against Saigon are planned from four or more positions to the east of the city. The targets include the Saigon port area and South Vietnamese naval facilities along the main shipping channel to Saigon.

7. The deployment of large rockets by the Viet Cong for use against targets in the Saigon area would present many problems to the enemy. The 140-mm. rockets used at Da Nang weighed nearly 100 pounds each and their transport and delivery to the Saigon region would be difficult. The rockets used at Da Nang were believed to have been transported by boat and raft during the Tet cease-fire period. The fact that the rocket itself is considered to be an area weapon rather than one that can be directed against specific targets also casts doubt on the

feasibility of using this type of weapon against selected targets in a heavily populated area.

8. Favorite allied targets of Viet Cong terrorists in and near Saigon include US and South Vietnamese headquarters areas, the Tan Son Nhut Air Base, the Long An ammunition dump, US installations at Bien Hoa, and other smaller installations such as police stations and housing areas.

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III. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Representatives from the Directorate are scheduled to meet with the Constituent Assembly on 14 March to iron out the remaining areas of controversy in the draft constitution. According to the US Embassy, the meeting may be one of the most crucial stages in the development of the constitution, depending on the extent to which the assembly delegates accept the Directorate's remaining recommendations.

2. Several members of the Directorate, both military and civilian, are reportedly quite dissatisfied with some of the articles. These articles include those governing military participation in politics, legislative authority to remove the cabinet by three-fourths vote, the weak military council, and the assembly's authority to act as a legislature until one is elected. It is not even clear whether the Directorate is satisfied with the assembly's decision to allow the first president to appoint province chiefs. It is possible that the assembly granted itself broad legislative powers in order to have a stronger negotiating position when it bargained with the Directorate. Whether the Directorate will invoke its power to revise the draft constitution will probably depend on the outcome of the discussions with the assembly. Similar talks in the past have resulted in compromises sufficient to avoid any open dispute between the two bodies.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. A document which was captured in Tay Ninh Province in early February and which belonged to an element of the Viet Cong 9th Division contains additional factual information on the presence of North Vietnamese soldiers in South Vietnam. The document, dated 1966, provides guidance for the handling of new recruits from North Vietnam. It points out that in the future recruits, instead of coming from the delta provinces, would be Vietnamese from North Vietnam or Cambodia, and also minority peoples from North Vietnam. The document describes the difficulties encountered by personnel infiltrating from the DRV, indicating that many of the men arrive in the South in poor health, having been weakened by malaria. It also notes that those left behind on the trails because of illness were not well treated.

2. The document reveals that North Vietnamese personnel upon arriving in the war zone became "confused" because of the differences in living, customs, the weather, and the general battlefield situation. It points out that other Vietnamese recruits who had previously lived abroad required intensive political indoctrination to prevent them from deserting.

3. The document insists that friction, authoritative attitudes, disrespect, arrogance, and division between South and North Vietnamese and between ethnic minority peoples be avoided. It instructs cadre to brief the new recruits on the heroic aspects of the units to which they were assigned and to have the units make them welcome. Moreover, the document cautions against revealing to the recruits shortcomings, the fierceness of the struggle, or losses sustained.

4. Some evidence of antagonism in combined Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army (NVA) units has recently become available. Relations between the Vietnamese and ethnic minority groups have always been strained, at best, and as additional Viet Cong and NVA elements are integrated, the problem of poor relations among the traditionally regionalistic Vietnamese will probably continue, despite Communist efforts to damp them.

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5. A diary of a Viet Cong soldier captured in Ninh Thuan Province at about the same time as the above document also contains information about the presence of North Vietnamese troops in the south. The soldier quoted remarks made to him at a re-orientation course conducted in mid-1966 to the effect that "the US knows that at present our troops are coming every day from North Vietnam to South Vietnam. Moreover, the road is eight meters wide and we keep them coming." Further on in the diary it was recorded that the course lecturer pointed out that North Vietnam would continue to send troops to South Vietnam and that the maximum manpower that can be mobilized in North Vietnam was one million men.

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